



~ Chapter 6 ~

Visitor education: acceptance and use
as a park management tool

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There is a perception that interp work is 'soft', not 'real' work. The results are often not tangible from face to face interp unlike fieldwork done by other rangers. I think there is a bit of resentment from other rangers towards interp people as ... [interpretation] ... is seen as a bit more of a 'glamour' cushy job. [Part of feedback provided by an Interpreter on pilot interpreter survey, July 2001]

6.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management tool. Its basis is the opinions held by interpreters and park managers, and provides a critique of the issues investigated by the research objective: ["To identify organisational barriers to the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management tool"](#). Key issues investigated by this chapter include the views held by interpreters and park managers as to the role and value of visitor education in the QPWS and the factors they believe affect the planning and delivery of visitor education activities at an operational level.

This chapter has three sections. Section 6.1 identifies the factors that interpreters believed affected the successful delivery of visitor education activities in the QPWS. It pinpoints the most significant barriers to the work they performed. It also qualifies issues identified in the literature against current perceptions. This is important as it provides data that supports the issues raised in Chapter 4. This section also includes an analysis of interpreters' opinions on the level of support they received from immediate supervisors and work colleagues for the work they did. This was to ascertain the overall perspective of interpreters to the role and value of visitor education at an operational level.

Section 6.2 details QPWS park managers' acceptance and use of visitor education. It investigates the role and value that Rangers-in-Charge, Senior Rangers and District Managers place on visitor education as a park management tool. This section also investigates the level of support they provide interpretive staff and includes an overview of who they believe is the best person to deliver visitor education activities on a national park. This is to ascertain the overall perspective of park managers as to the

role and value of visitor education at an operational level. This analysis is important as it will serve as a reference to the perspective of interpreters. Section 6.3 provides a summary of the main points identified in this chapter.

6.1 Factors affecting interpreters' ability to deliver visitor education services on behalf of the QPWS

6.1.1 Barriers to the role and value of visitor education

Interpreters face many challenges to the planning and delivery of effective visitor education programs. Many of these challenges are barriers to the work they perform and include things such as inadequate funding, limited resourcing and a negative organisational culture (QPWS 1999b; QPWS 2001a; QPWS 2001b). The level of support provided by supervisors is also a barrier, with many interpreters revealing that the level of support they received from their immediate supervisor was inadequate. Chapter 4 identified nine specific barriers to the work that interpreter's performed (Table 6.1). Each of these barriers, individually and in combination, has the potential to diminish the role and value of visitor education in the QPWS and the work that interpreters do (Parkin 2003a).

Table 6.1: Barriers to the work that interpreters perform
(Source: QPWS 1999b; QPWS 2001a; QPWS 2001b)

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ A corporate culture that does not recognise the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation▪ Disillusionment with interpretation as a career path▪ High workloads and short project timeframes▪ Poor resourcing and a lack of funding▪ Poor understanding of each other's job roles, resulting in antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff▪ The lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation, causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes▪ The lack of training and professional development opportunities for people working in interpretation▪ The non-acceptance of interpretation and education as a legitimate park management tool by senior managers▪ Time consuming project and content approval processes |
|---|

As this study aimed to determine the significance of these barriers to the value and use of visitor education as a park management tool, interpreters were asked to diamond rank¹⁷ the above list, from 'most significant' to 'least significant'. This was to determine the most significant barriers to the work performed by interpreters. It is a method used to distinguish between those factors that respondents may recognise easily as being of most or least importance, and those factors that lie somewhere between the two extremes.

Consequently, interpreters identified '*poor resourcing and a lack of funding*', '*high workloads and short project timeframes*', and '*a corporate culture that does not recognise the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation*' as the barriers of most significance affecting the work they perform (Figure 6.1). In contrast, '*the lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes*', '*poor understanding of each other's job roles causing antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff*', and '*disillusionment with interpretation as a career path*' were considered by interpreters as the three barriers of least significance. The barriers considered by interpreters to be neither the most nor least significant were '*the non-acceptance of interpretation and education as a legitimate park management tool by senior managers*', '*time consuming project and content approval processes*' and '*the lack of training and professional development opportunities for people working in interpretation*'.

17 Diamond ranking involves identifying the most significant and least significant factors first and putting the number of the most significant at the top of the diamond and least significant at the bottom. The next two significant and least significant factors are subsequently identified and their numbers put on their respective lines in the diamond. The numbers of the remaining three factors are written on the middle line.

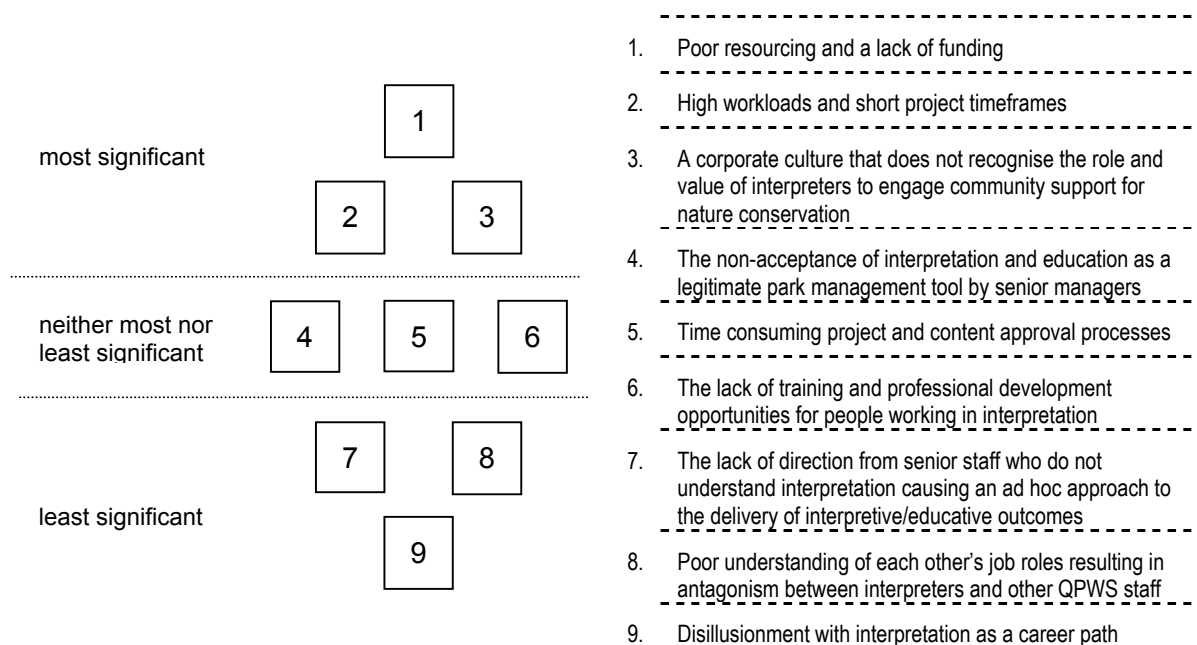



Figure 6.1: Interpreter ranking of the factors that act as barriers to the visitor education work they perform from most to least significant

While the diamond ranking method provided an overall diagrammatic picture of the barriers of most and least significance affecting the ability of interpreters to implement the Government's community nature conservation agenda, percentage distributions revealed that some barriers affected a particular group of interpreters more than others. For example, regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters both identified, '*poor resourcing and a lack of funding*' as the most significant barrier (66% and 63% respectively) to the visitor education work they performed, while BFP interpreters identified the '*the non-acceptance of interpretation and education as a legitimate park management tool by senior managers*' (Table 6.2). Regional/district interpreters also identified '*high workloads and short project timeframes*' (46% and 48% respectively), and '*a corporate culture that does not recognise the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation*' (44% and 42% respectively) as the next two most significant barriers. In contrast, BFP interpreters identified the '*poor resourcing and a lack of funding*', and '*high workloads and short project timeframes*' (80% and 40% respectively) as their next two most significant barriers.

Table 6.2: Percentage ranking of the factors that act as barriers to the visitor education work performed by interpreters

Factor*	Regional/district interpreters (n = 16; no answer provided = 13%)			Field/centre-based interpreters (n = 19; no answer provided = 14%)			BFP interpreters (n = 5; no answer provided = 0%)		
	most significant	neither most nor least significant	least significant	most significant	neither most nor least significant	least significant	most significant	neither most nor least significant	least significant
Poor resourcing and a lack of funding	66	26	6	63	32	0	80	20	0
High workloads and short project timeframes	46	26	19	48	26	6	40	40	20
A corporate culture that does not recognise the role and value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation	44	31	13	42	37	6	20	60	20
The non-acceptance of interpretation and education as a legitimate park management tool by senior managers	26	61	12	21	27	38	100	0	0
Time consuming project and content approval processes	26	38	26	21	32	32	0	20	80
The lack of training and professional development opportunities for people working in interpretation	12	44	32	16	42	31	0	60	40
The lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation, causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes	12	38	38	27	11	48	20	20	60
Poor understanding of each other's job roles, causing antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff	18	6	62	16	31	37	40	20	40
Disillusionment with interpretation as a career path	26	6	67	21	16	63	0	60	40

 The three most significant factors according to each group of interpreters.

* Note: Some factors have been reworded to improve textual language. Where possible the context in which the factor is framed remains the same. Refer to Appendix 1, Question 9 for actual wording of factors in original questionnaire.

In comparison, barriers of least significance identified by regional/district interpreters, field/centre-based interpreters and BFP interpreters were:

Regional/district interpreters

- 'poor understanding of each other's job roles causing antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff (62%)

- *'disillusionment with interpretation as a career path'* (67%), and
- *'the lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes'* (38%).

Field/centre-based interpreters

- *'disillusionment with interpretation as a career path'* (63%)
- *'the lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes'* (48%), and
- *'the non-acceptance of interpretation and education as a legitimate park management tool by senior managers'* (38%).

BFP interpreters

- *'time consuming project and content approval processes'* (80%)
- *'the lack of direction from senior staff who do not understand interpretation causing an ad hoc approach to the delivery of interpretive/educative outcomes'* (60%), and
- *'poor understanding of each other's job roles causing antagonism between interpreters and other QPWS staff'* (40%).

The identification of the three most significant factors by interpreters supports other beliefs held by them regarding the role and value of visitor education in QPWS. For example, the identification of *'poor resourcing and lack of funding'* as the most significant barrier validates the belief held by interpreters that more staff and better resourcing were required to achieve QPWS stated outcomes for visitor education. Nearly all regional/district interpreters (94%), 84 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 80 percent of BFP interpreters implied that this was the case (Figure 6.2). However, while extra staff and funding were required, staffing was the higher priority (QPWS 2001b).

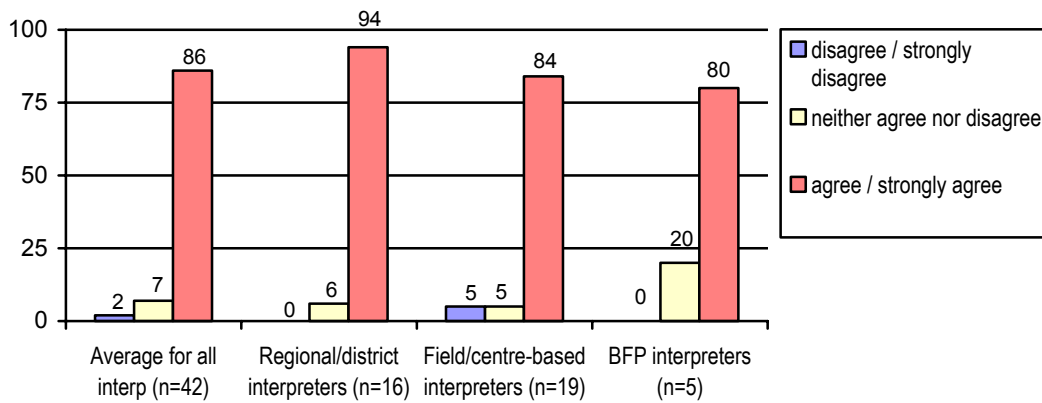


Figure 6.2: Interpreters' response to statement that 'more staff and better resourcing are required to achieve QPWS stated outcomes for interpretation'

In addition, data interpretation suggests interpreter concerns about staffing and resourcing may have contributed to the factor '*high workloads and short project timeframes*' being nominated as the second-most significant barrier by regional/district and field/centre-based interpreters (refer Table 6.1). Staffing and resourcing affect work load volume and interpreters ability to successfully complete projects in a timely manner affecting productivity and the quality of work produced by interpreters. In fact, 63 percent of regional/district interpreters and 58 percent of field/centre-based interpreters admitted that 'current workloads and demands on time often prevent quality visitor education outcomes being achieved' (Figure 6.3). Forty percent of BFP interpreters also agreed with this disclosure.

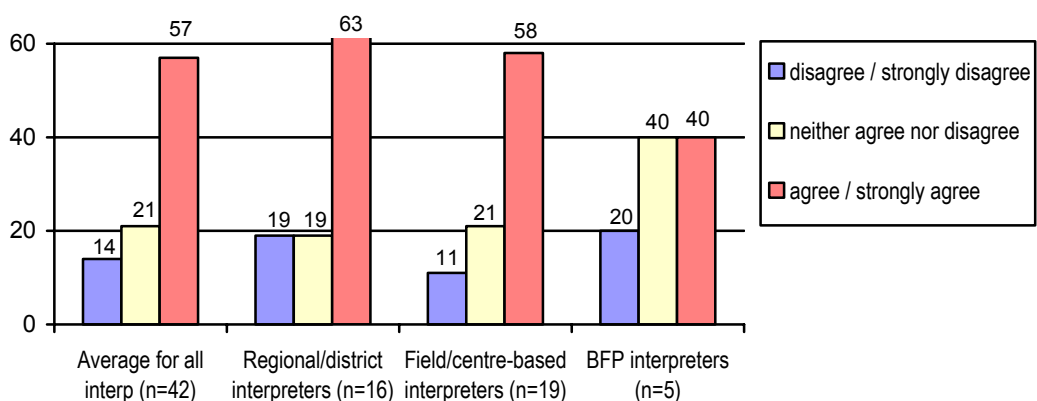


Figure 6.3: Interpreters' response to statement that 'current workloads and demands on time often prevent quality interpretation/education outcomes being achieved'

Seventy-five percent of regional/district interpreters and 48 percent of field/centre-based interpreters also claimed that *'interpretive work is often reactive with a scattergun approach to addressing issues that are common to many areas'* (Figure 6.4). This disclosure supports interpreters' claims that *poor resourcing and a lack of funding* were affecting the quality of the outcomes being achieved. However, only 20 percent of BFP interpreters believed that this was the case. Thirteen percent of regional/district interpreters, 6 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 20 percent of BFP interpreters disputed this statement. However, 13 percent of regional/district interpreters, 42 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 60 percent of BFP interpreters were undecided on this issue. The reason(s) why a third of all interpreters neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement are unknown. It is possible that, for this group of interpreters, only part of the statement was correct or incorrect.

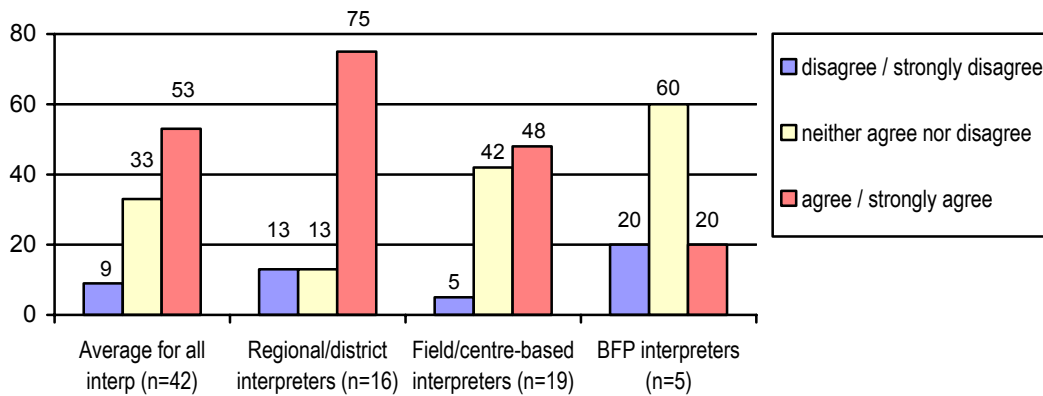


Figure 6.4: Interpreters' response to statement that *'interpretive work is often reactive with a scattergun approach to addressing issues which are common to many areas'*

6.1.2 Support received from immediate supervisors and work colleagues

Data interpretation suggests that the support interpreters received from their immediate supervisors varied from *'no support, generally left alone to do the best job possible'* through to *'very supportive, provides guidance and resources when required'* (Appendix 2: Question 22). However, BFP interpreters were likely to have more supportive supervisors than their regional/district and field/centre-based counterparts (Figure 6.5). For example, 80 percent of BFP interpreters said that in the last 12 months their immediate supervisors were *'very regularly'* (61–80% of the time) to *'nearly always'* (more than 81% of the time) very supportive and provided guidance and

resources when required, compared with 44 percent of regional/district interpreters and 22 percent of field/centre-based interpreters.

To further highlight the level of support BFP interpreters received from their immediate supervisors over that experienced by regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters; 25 percent of regional/district interpreters and 11 percent of field/centre-based interpreters said that their immediate supervisors were 'never' (0% of the time) 'very supportive or provided guidance and resources when required'. No BFP interpreter expressed a similar level of undervaluing.

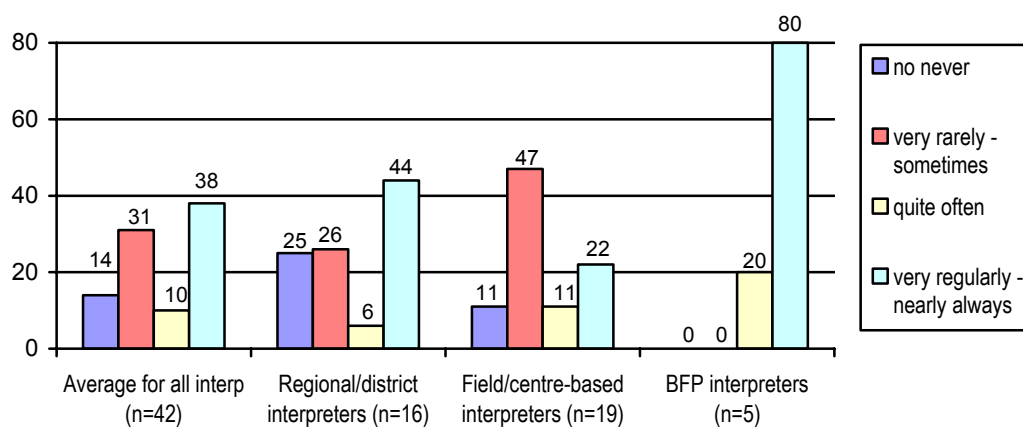


Figure 6.5: Interpreters' response to the statement that their immediate supervisor(s) had been 'very supportive; provided guidance and resources when required' towards the range of interpretive work that they had performed in the last 12 months

The high level of support that BFP interpreters received from their immediate supervisors was reinforced by the fact that none of this group of interpreters indicated that in the last 12 months their immediate supervisors 'quite often' to 'nearly always' provided 'no support or questioned the value of the work they did'. In contrast, 19 percent of regional/district interpreters and 33 percent of field/centre-based interpreters said that their immediate supervisors displayed these negative traits towards the work that they performed (Figure 6.6).

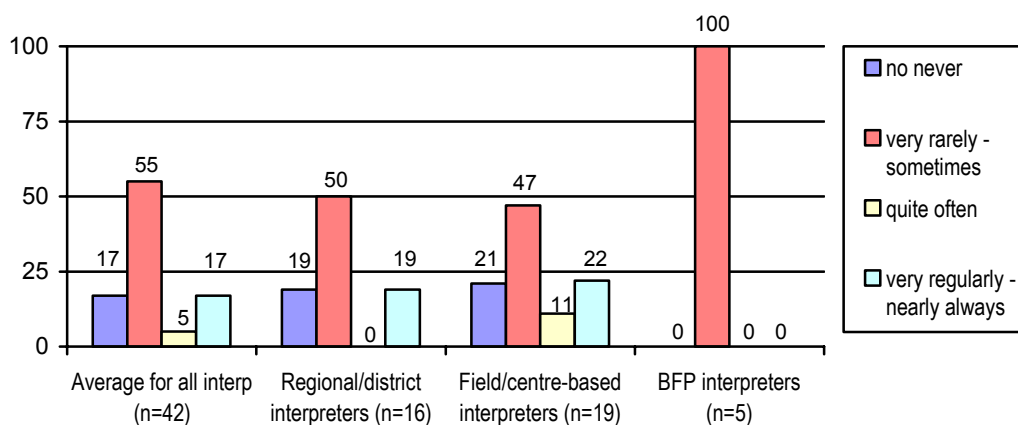


Figure 6.6: Interpreters' response to the statement that their immediate supervisor(s) had provided 'no support; generally left alone to do the best job possible with available resources; or sometimes questions value of the work I do' towards the range of interpretive work that they had performed in the last 12 months

People working in non-interpretive roles supervise many interpreters. Consequently, these supervisors may not understand or appreciate the use of visitor education as a park management tool. Hooper and Weiss (1990, p11) claim that this circumstance is because;

many managers have little or no training in interpretation and, therefore, have limited knowledge of interpretation's potential to solve management problems.

Most managers are aware of the value of visitor education to promote positive educational and recreational experiences, but less convinced of the benefits of using visitor education as a park management tool (Hooper & Weiss 1990). Consequently, the negative support experienced by some regional/district interpreters and some field/centre-based interpreters may be a direct result of their supervisor's lack of knowledge of the role and value of visitor education as a park management tool.

Field/centre-based interpreters were also less likely to experience feelings of support for the work they performed by non-interpretive work colleagues than their regional/district and BFP counterparts (Figure 6.7). For example, 42 percent of this group of interpreters claimed that they 'quite often' (41–60% of the time) to 'very regularly – nearly always' (more than 61% of the time) felt non-interpretive work colleagues undervalued the visitor education work they performed. In contrast, only 26 percent of regional/district interpreters and 40 percent of BFP interpreters expressed similar opinions.

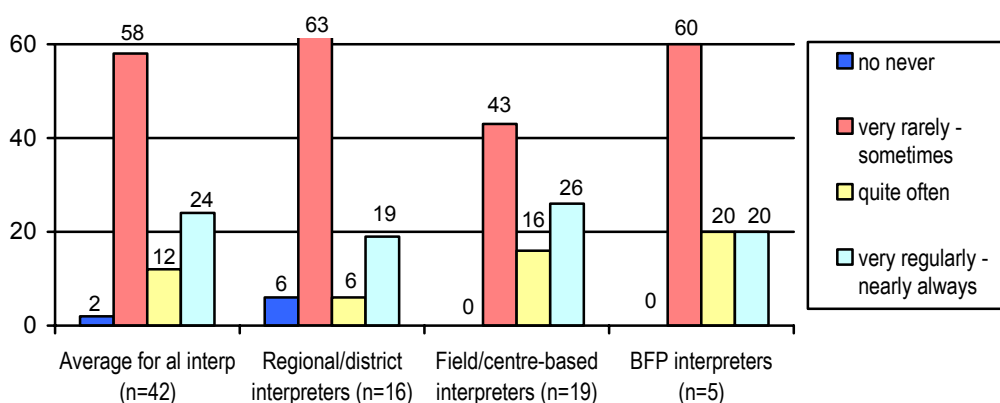


Figure 6.7: Feelings of undervaluing experienced by each group of interpreters towards the work they performed by non-interpretive work colleagues

Comments made by field/centre-based interpreters provided some insight as to why there was a higher feeling of undervaluing among this group of interpreters. In most instances, acceptance of, and support for visitor education as a park management tool was central to the cause of the undervaluing. For example:

Interpretation is not seen as part of 'park management' or 'operations' in many parks. Neither is it seen or supported as critical within the higher management (as reflected in resourcing). [IN 11, q23]

Other park staff may question the value of time spent doing interp and do not understand the process and procedures required, as those required to fulfil Public Contact duties (camp bookings, permit issuance, administration). [IN 33, q23]

Interpretation seems to come second to wildlife and park duties. Interp staff are expected to drop their work to help out when needed, but this favour is never returned. [IN 53, q23]

The nature of visitor education work, including the use of computers to develop materials and the conduct of activities were also reasons raised why field/centre-based interpreters felt undervalued by non-interpretive work colleagues. For example:

I don't think they realise how intense children are. They also don't understand the pressure on us when taking a group on a walk. [IN 43, q23]

People don't seem to understand the time required to prepare an effective interp activity OR see the value of spending time on interp. This can be especially difficult in areas where field maintenance and resource

management is required as if these aren't done, then there will be nothing to interpret. [IN 48, q23]

Because there are often no tangible/physical 'returns' from interp activities in particular, others question effectiveness and importance of the job. Long hours at computers developing interp resources also contributes to this perception. Other staff don't have the opportunity or desire to see what the job of interpreter entails. Perceived as being 'soft' work (perhaps not even 'work' at all). As most interpreters are women, sexist attitudes to the field prevail. [IN 30, q23]

The reference made by an interpreter about sexist attitudes indicates that stereotyping according to gender was also causing a feeling of undervaluing among interpreters. This issue was also raised in the literature (QPWS 2001a). For example, 69 percent of interpreters believed that the stereotypic view, 'males do park work and females do interpretation' existed in the QPWS (Appendix 2: Question 14(t)). This was despite the Department's Equal Opportunity Employment Policy. The predominance of females working in interpretation (currently 1 male to 7.6 females) may perpetuate this view. While the nature of visitor education work may be a contributing factor, males do apply for and are interviewed for interpretive positions. However, they generally do not perform as well as females in the interview process (P. Harmon-Price pers comm. 11 January 2002). Yet, initiatives to reduce stereotyping and encourage non-interpretive park staff to be involved in visitor education within the QPWS are being implemented. For example:

Attitudes toward interp are changing due to the excellent management directive to get more staff involved in interp. Traditionally there were 'interp only' staff and 'wildlife staff'. Animosity did exist because interp staff were regarded as highly paid for doing what was perceived as very little by 'working' wildlife staff. Now wildlife staff are given interp duties, attitudes have changed. Interpreters have been trained in 'wildlife' duties. [IN 49, q23]

Other rangers in my park always help out with holiday programs and run their own activities. In this way they are very supportive and understand the value of interpretation. Though sometimes they wonder why things are taking so long (i.e. getting an information centre together). They find it hard to understand all the processes involved and all the brick walls you hit. And it's difficult to explain ... until you've been through it yourself. [IN 60, q23]

In an effort to further reduce stereotyping, most interpreters thought that rangers and other field staff should be encouraged to perform visitor education activities as part of their work duties (Appendix 2: Question 14(i)). (Only one BFP interpreter said that they should not be encouraged), as this would reduce antagonism between interpreters and

non-interpreters and allow staff to better understand each other's work roles and reduce the perception that 'females do interpretation and males do park work'. However, in saying so, most regional/district interpreters (63%) and field/centre-based interpreters (62%) did not believe that Public Contact Rangers and Interpretive Rangers should be involved in duties such as administration and park maintenance, only interpretation and public contact (Figure 6.8). Only a quarter of all regional/district interpreters, 26 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and 40 percent of BFP interpreters disagree with this notion.

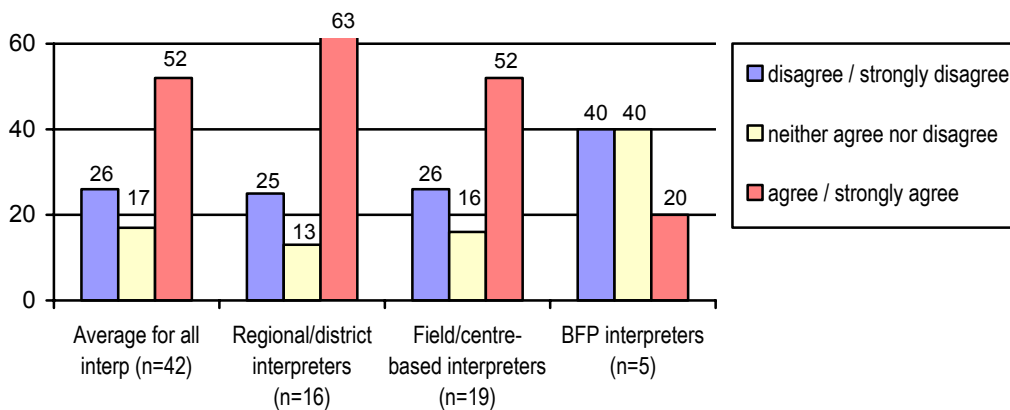


Figure 6.8: Interpreters' response to statement that 'Public Contact Rangers and Interpretive Rangers should primarily be involved in interpretation and public contact rather than duties such as administration and park maintenance'

A better understanding of each other's work roles is required if interpreters and non-interpretive work colleagues are to work co-operatively together. For example:

On this site I am left to do interp programs etc without conflict. Fellow rangers help out where required and I help them out if required. We are fortunate to have a co-operative team. [IN 6, q23]

6.1.3 Organisational acceptance of visitor education

Organisational culture is variously described as 'the way we do things around here' (Passfield 1989; Anderson 2005). It is both an accomplishment and a constraint (Passfield 1989; Parker 2000), and an indicator of the performance of an organisation, in terms of functioning and outputs (Anderson 2005). However, many interpreters believed that a negative organisational culture existed in the QPWS, affecting their

ability to achieve specific visitor education outcomes. For example, most regional/district interpreters (63%) and their field/centre-based (64%) counterparts thought that the culture of the QPWS did not recognise the value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation (Figure 6.9). Most BFP interpreters (80%) also thought that a negative visitor education culture existed in the QPWS. Only one (6%) regional/district interpreter rejected this belief. However, nearly a third of all regional/district interpreters and field/centre-based interpreters and 20 percent of BFP interpreters neither agreed nor disagreed that the culture of the organisation failed to recognise the value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation.

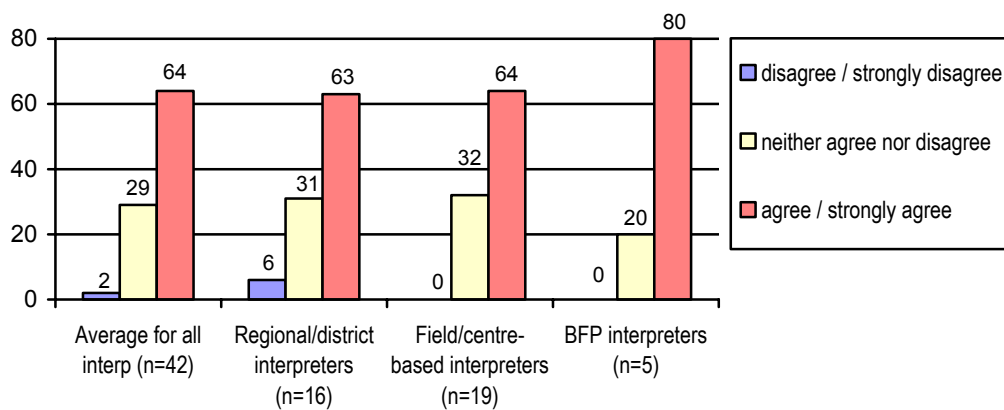


Figure 6.9: Interpreters' response to statement that QPWS corporate culture does not recognise the value of interpreters to engage community support for nature conservation

Fifty-seven percent of regional/district interpreters, 47 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and all BFP interpreters also believed that the culture of the organisation provided a barrier to the acceptance of visitor education as a park management tool (Figure 6.10). While BFP interpreters identified this issue as their most significant barrier to the visitor education work that they performed, 12 percent of regional/district interpreters and six percent of field/centre-based interpreters disagreed with this opinion. However, around a third of these two groups of interpreters neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement.

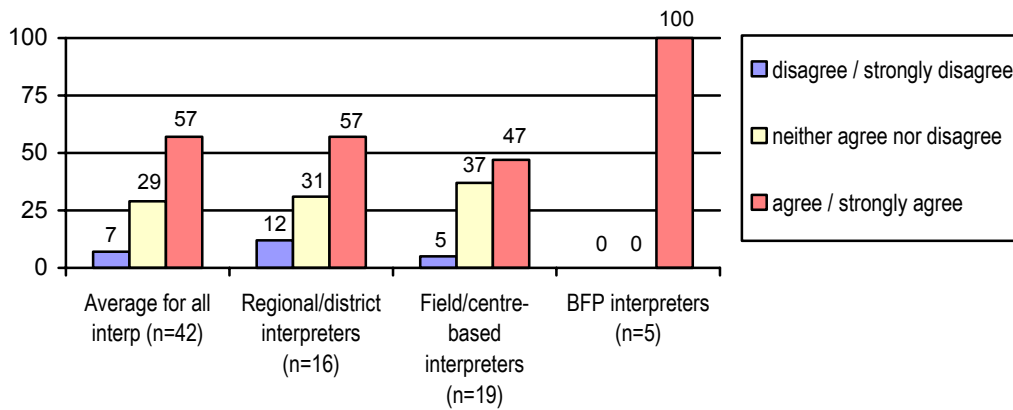


Figure 6.10: Interpreters' response to statement that 'the corporate culture of the QPWS provides a barrier to the acceptance of visitor education as a park management tool'

The identification that 94 percent of regional/district interpreters, 74 percent of field/centre-based interpreters and all BFP interpreters also believed that some QPWS managers regarded interpretation as a luxury and a lower priority than other park management activities (Appendix 2: Question 14(v)) reinforces the view held by many interpreters of a negative cultural bias in the QPWS. As one respondent commented:

Most RICs and SRs I have met put a low priority on interpretation and do not even know what interpretation means. They are the staff that need interpretive training. Ideally Rangers in Charge and Senior Rangers should be required to attend interpretive training and probably should not be promoted to these positions unless they have a clear understanding and appreciation of interpretation and its value. [IN 13, ac]

However, not all interpreters believed that the negative cultural view is external to the workings of the Interpretation and Community Relations team. Some interpreters believed that the culture of the Interpretation and Community Relations team perpetuated the non-acceptance of visitor education as a legitimate park management tool by working in isolation. They thought the team should become more mainstream and get away from 'interpretation' and move into 'public contact' to become more meaningful. As one respondent commented:

If interp was less 'pigeon-holed' by its name and the corporate culture surrounding it, then maybe it would be better understood and appreciated by others. [IN 12, ac]

6.2 QPWS Park Manager support for and use of visitor education as a park management tool

6.2.1 Importance placed on visitor education as a park management tool

Most QPWS park managers (54%) claim that they place equal importance on the use of visitor education and park management tools such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening to achieve protection of the natural resource (Figure 6.11). However, 27 percent of QPWS park managers claimed that they placed greater importance on visitor education to protect the natural resource than the other park management tools available to them. In contrast, 18 percent of QPWS park managers stated that they placed a greater importance on park management tools other than visitor education.

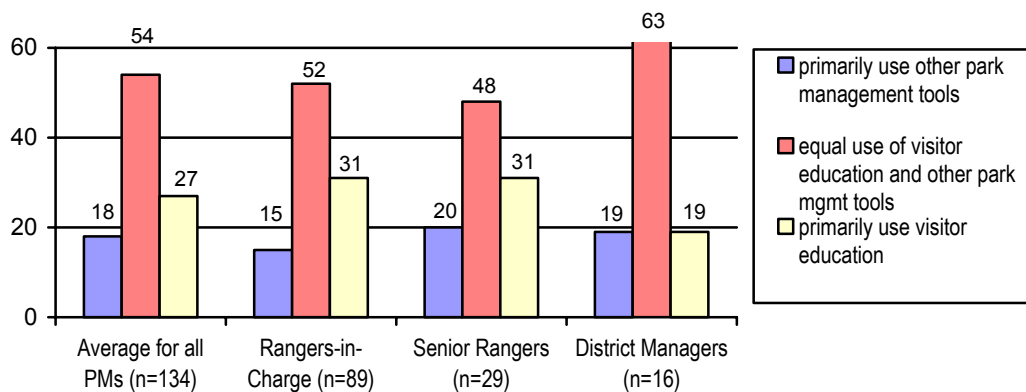


Figure 6.11: Emphasis placed by park managers on visitor education as a park management tool to achieve protection of the natural environment

Fifty-two percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 48 percent of Senior Rangers and 63 percent of District Managers claimed that they placed equal emphasis on the use visitor education and the other park management tools available to them because a combined effort was required to manage the national park estate. To support their point of view, this group of park managers cited reasons that identified visitor education as one of a number of tools. They also added that visitor education must be used in conjunction with other practical natural resource management initiatives to provide a good mix of techniques for effective park management (62% of comments) (Figure 6.12). For example:

I & E used in conjunction with practical on-ground NRM provides for a good mix for overall park management. [PM 86, q6]

I & E is only one of many tools. An appropriate, balanced use of a combination usually achieves results. [PM 1, q6]

It is never one or the other. It is essential to provide a mix of management tools which is appropriate for the situation/circumstance/messages/objectives. [PM 146, q6]

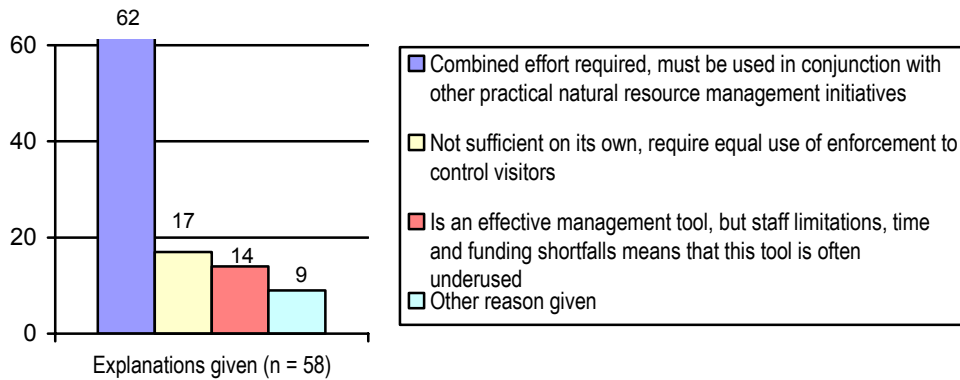


Figure 6.12: Reasons why a combined visitor education / natural resource emphasis was required

However, some QPWS park managers believed that this combination should be an equal mix of visitor education and enforcement (17% of comments). This, they stated, was necessary to achieve management objectives and compliant visitor behaviour. For example:

Balance of I & E and compliance required to achieve statutory requirements/plan requirements. [PM 91, q6]

Experience has shown that unless the interp is backed up by enforcement, people either won't obey or ensure they are aware of relevant rules (etc.) put into place to manage parks. [PM 105, q6]

The Department must combine both. Unless you hit offenders in the back pocket all the documents/signs in the world will not achieve the desired goal. [PM 74, q6]

Other QPWS park managers thought that visitor education was an effective management tool (when used in equal combination with the other park management tools), but, due to limitations of staff, time and money, this tool was severely underused, as priority was given to 'hands-on' work (14% of comments). For example:

Interp is used as much as practical, subject to the limitations of staff, time and \$\$\$. Priority given to getting hands-on done first, but utilising interp opportunities as they arise. [PM 54, q6]

I & E dependent on funding and time availability at park level. Equal use reflective of limited funding and lack of staff resources at park level. [PM 14, q6]

The preference for a greater emphasis on visitor education was also very strong amongst QPWS park managers. For example, nearly one third of all Rangers-in-Charge and Senior Rangers and 19 percent of District Managers, said that they primarily used visitor education to achieve protection of the natural environment (refer Figure 6.11). Statements such as being ‘the foundation of other management tools’ (14% of comments), it ‘assists management by making people aware of management issues’ (36% of comments), has the ‘ability to change attitudes thus positively influencing behaviour’ (22% of comments, and ‘is necessary for broader community support’ (14% of comments) were common among this group (Figure 6.13). For example:

I think I & E is the foundation of other management tools. [PM 13, q6]

I & E is forward planning. If we forget the kids, schools and un-environmentally aware people, we are not doing our job. The environment is EVERYBODY’S RESPONSIBILITY. Guidance, training and education is required to inform and lead. [PM 67, q6]

A very important management tool, particular for the younger generation. If an area is to be closed for management purposes, it is important to give an explanation so that people may respect that decision. [PM 44, q6]

Without the hearts and minds of the tax payer with regard to environmental protection nothing will improve or change. I & E is the only way but results are only achieved 10–15 years down the track. If one does not plan 20 years ahead there will be no public support. [PM 95, q6]

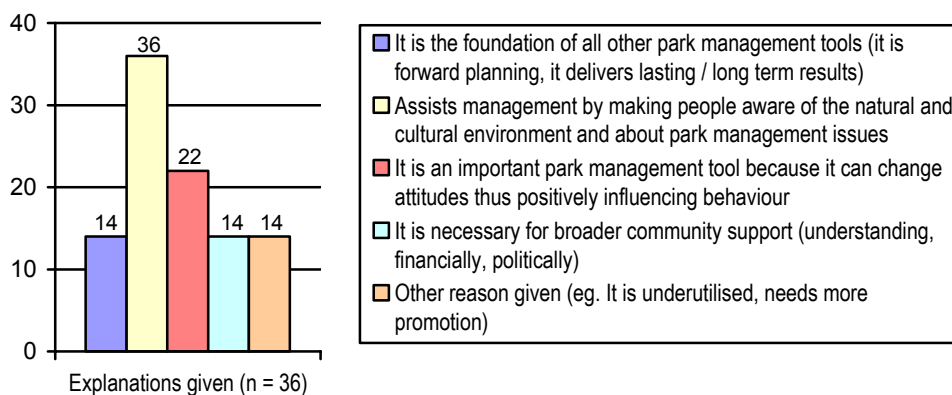


Figure 6.13: Reasons why some park managers placed a greater emphasis on visitor education to achieve park management goals

In contrast, 15 percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 20 percent of Senior Rangers and 19 percent of District Managers said that they primarily used park management tools other than visitor education (refer Figure 6.11). In general, this group of park managers cited three broad reasons why they primarily used park management tools other than visitor education:

1. A primary natural resource management focus due to low visitation, the time spent on routine and reactive tasks, skill level of staff, or the lack of funding and resourcing (63% of comments);
2. An acknowledgement that visitor education was important, but was ineffective on its own (21% of comments); and/or
3. An acknowledgement that visitor education was important for visitor satisfaction, but had very little to do with natural resource management issues (16% of comments) (Figure 6.14).

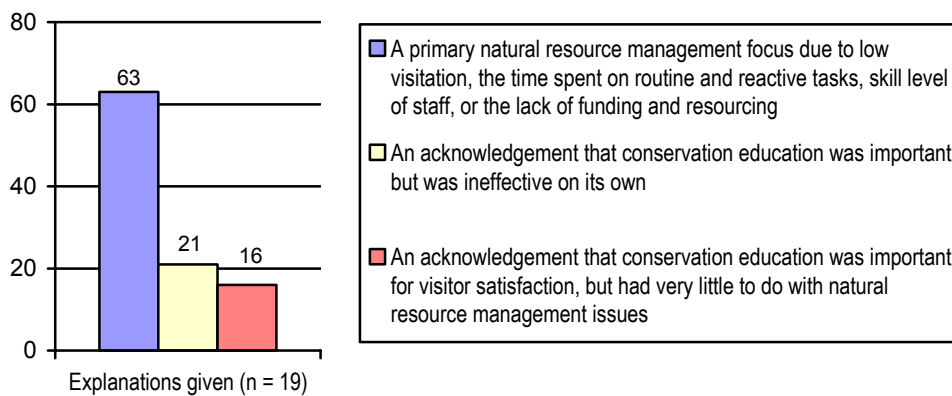


Figure 6.14: Reasons why some park managers primarily used park management tools other than visitor education

Explanations by this group of QPWS park managers in support of their primary natural resource management focus included:

Attempts are made where possible, but [this] District does not have a liaison/extension or interp officer. In our inherent poverty cycle I & E is usually a wishful day dream. No funding. [PM 93, q6]

Would like to have said 5 [i.e. emphasis on I & E to protect natural resource], but the reality is that reactive and routine tasks take up so much time, I & E gets shoved aside. [PM 81, q6]

I & E important for visitor satisfaction but very little to do with NRM issues. [PM 108, q6]

6.2.2 Best person to provide visitor education activities on a national park

Sixty-nine percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 57 percent of Senior Rangers and 56 percent of District Managers believed the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park was a permanent Public Contact or Interpretive Ranger (Figure 6.15). This was due to their better understanding of the park, its natural systems and the issues associated with its management.

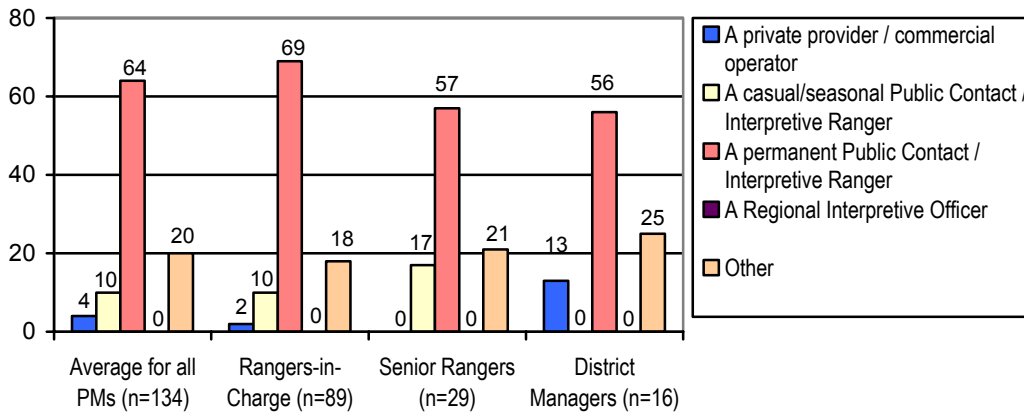


Figure 6.15: Park managers' opinions on who the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park is

Rangers-in-Charge, Senior Rangers and District Managers also said that permanent Public Contact / Interpretive Rangers ensured delivery and consistency of visitor education messages which contributed to effective service delivery. They were also better able to research, prepare and present material more effectively because they were not concerned about temporary employment.

Comments such as 'detailed knowledge', 'better understanding', 'personal experience' and 'credibility' were used by QPWS park managers to explain why a permanent Public Contact / Interpretive Ranger was the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park (Figure 6.16). For example:

Permanent (interp) ranger staff demonstrate a better understanding of both natural systems and local threatening processes and have a broader range of personal experience and anecdotal comment to raise their level of credibility with clients. [PM 14, q5]

Park based interp staff can deliver the specialist service required for that park/natural resource. Interp programs can be developed to suit the park and assist with particular management requirements of the park. [PM 98, q5]

A dedicated (interp) ranger would be able to provide a high level of service and enable the routine operations of the park to continue without disruption.

[PM 24, q5]

The person becomes known to the community, develops credibility with some and can best deal with local and emergent issues as well as the big picture.

[PM 100, q5]

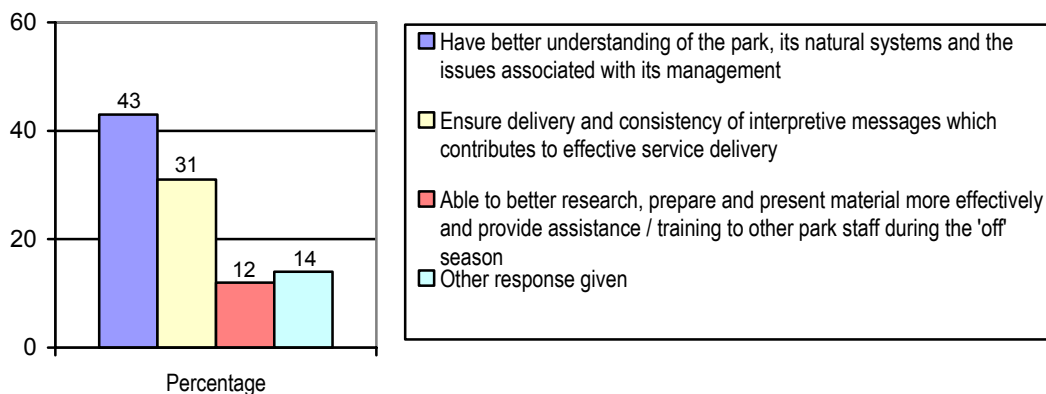


Figure 6.16: Reasons why a permanent Public Contact/Interpretive Ranger is the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park

However, 10 percent of Rangers-in-Charge and 17 percent of Senior Rangers thought that a casual/seasonal Public Contact or Interpretive Ranger would be the most suitable person. This was due to seasonal visitation in their area. For example;

Due to the definite tourist season a seasonal interp ranger would be most appropriate. [PM 122, q5]

Only have visitors 7–8 months a year. [PM 144, q5]

In addition, two percent of Rangers-in-Charge and 13 percent of District Managers thought that a private provider/commercial operator was the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park. This was due to their belief that visitor education was a specialist area requiring commitment, training and selection. For example;

The most visited park in my work area has 7+ guides operating a 7-days-a-week, 52-weeks-a-year roster. The Service could never match this commitment of training, personality selection, rostering and admin. Private enterprise has done well. [PM 78, q5]

Nonetheless, one Ranger-in-Charge (1%) thought that signs and brochures were the best means to provide visitor education services on their parks. This was because their park was an undeveloped park and received limited visitation. For example;

Undeveloped park – limited visitors. Public contact by signage or face-to-face informal conversations. [PM 131, q5]

Seventeen percent of Rangers-in-Charge, 21 percent of Senior Rangers and 25 percent of District Managers provided a response that did not fit the choices detailed in the question. These responses were noted and coded as 'Other response given' (Appendix 2: Question 5). These responses either identified the RIC and/or other park staff as the most suitable person to deliver visitor education services on a national park (RICs – 11%; SRs – 21% & DMs – 5%), or that the provision of visitor education services was site or situation dependent (RICs – 7%; SRs – 0% & DMs – 20%).

6.2.3 Level of support provided to interpretive staff by park managers

QPWS park managers often provide interpretive staff with additional support to assist them in the delivery of visitor education services for their park and/or district area. This additional support generally consists of:

- advice about the park/district;
- feedback on draft interpretive brochures, signs, etc. (for the park/district);
- funding support (to initiate/complete park/district visitor education requests);
- logistical support (e.g. photocopying, vehicles, etc., to initiate/complete park/district visitor education requests);
- additional interpretive staffing to get job done; and/or
- to allow participation in training opportunities.

However, this level of additional support varied among QPWS park managers (Table 6.3). For example, while most Rangers-in-Charge, Senior Rangers and District Managers said that they 'regularly or always' provided advice about the park/district and feedback on draft interpretive brochures and signs, etc. to interpreters, many said that they provided 'none or rarely'. Most Rangers-in-Charge, Senior Rangers and District Managers also said that they 'regularly or always' provided logistical support such as photocopies and vehicles (so interpreters may initiate/complete park/district

visitor education requests) but many QPWS park managers also said they provided 'none or rarely'.

Senior Rangers and District Managers were also more likely to 'regularly or always' provide funding support to initiate/complete park/district visitor education requests than their Ranger-in-Charge counterparts. However, very few QPWS park managers said that they 'regularly or always' provided additional interpretive staffing to get the job done. Most Rangers-in-Charge and District Managers and a fair proportion of Senior Rangers said they provided 'none or rarely' supported such assistance. Most Rangers-in-Charge, Senior Rangers and District Managers also said that they 'regularly or always' allowed interpreters to participate in training opportunities while many also said that they provided 'none or rarely'.

Table 6.3: Level of support provided by QPWS park managers to interpretive staff who deliver services for their park and/or district

Type of support provided	Rangers-in-Charge (n = 89; no answer provided = 3 - 6%)		Senior Rangers (n = 29; no answer provided = 0 - 10%)		District Managers (n = 16; no answer provided = 6%)	
	None or Rarely	Regularly or Always	None or Rarely	Regularly or Always	None or Rarely	Regularly or Always
Advice about the park/district	20	76	24	72	25	69
Feedback on draft interpretive brochures, signs, etc.	24	76	24	72	19	75
Funding support	57	38	38	55	6	88
Logistical support (e.g. photocopying, vehicles, etc)	45	52	10	82	13	81
Additional interpretive staffing to get job done	62	35	44	45	51	44
Allow participation in training opportunities	43	51	14	79	26	69



Level of support provided by most QPWS park managers in each category

6.2.4 Park manager opinions on the use of visitor education to manage particular natural resource management issues

Visitor education can promote environmental awareness, visitor safety and responsible action. Consequently, it is an important park management tool and can be used to address management issues such as:

- protecting fragile resources (by directing visitors to other areas);
- reducing intentional and unintentional vandalism;
- reducing accidents by explaining unusual dangers;
- increasing understanding of, and compliance with, management activities; and
- increasing knowledge of land management objectives (reservation, conservation) (Beckmann 1991, p41).

Most QPWS park managers acknowledged the value of visitor education to address the natural resource management issues outlined in Table 6.4. Support for visitor education in equal combination or with a greater emphasis with techniques such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening was high. However, differences of opinion were evident. For example, while most District Managers believed that visitor education in equal or greater combination with other park management techniques should be used to address the issues identified, Senior Rangers and Rangers-in-Charge did not (Appendix 4, Question 1). Most Senior Rangers believed issues such as '*allowing areas to regenerate*', '*protecting fragile resources*' and '*undertaking maintenance activities*' were better addressed through techniques such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening (55%, 59% and 51% respectively) while most Rangers-in-Charge believed the issue '*undertaking maintenance activities*' (51%) was also better addressed by techniques other than visitor education.


Differences of opinion also existed among the three groups of QPWS park managers who believed visitor education should be a major component of any strategy to address the issues identified. For example:

- Most Senior Rangers (48%) and District Managers (38%) believed that the issue, '*managing visitor use of available resource*' was best managed through the equal use of visitor education and techniques such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening, while most Rangers-in-Charge (49%) believed greater emphasis should be placed on visitor education;
- Most Rangers-in-Charge (40%) believed that the issue, '*increasing compliance with management activities*' was best managed through the equal use of visitor education and techniques such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening, while most Senior Rangers (45%) and District Managers (50%) believed greater emphasis should be placed on visitor education;

- Most District Managers (50%) believe that the issue, '*increasing compliance with management activities*' is best managed through the equal use of visitor education and techniques such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening, while most Rangers-in-Charge (39%) and Senior Rangers (41%) believe greater emphasis should be placed on visitor education;

Table 6.4: Level of opinion held by QPWS park managers in regards to the use of visitor education to manage particular natural resource management issues

Natural resource management issues	Rangers-in-Charge (n = 89; no answer provided = %)			Senior Rangers (n = 29; no answer provided = %)			District Managers (n = 16; no answer provided = %)		
	emphasis on other park management tools	equal emphasis	emphasis on visitor education	emphasis on other park management tools	equal emphasis	emphasis on visitor education	emphasis on other park management tools	equal emphasis	emphasis on visitor education
allowing areas to regenerate	46	30	21	55	17	28	31	38	31
managing visitor use of available resource	16	34	49	13	48	38	25	38	31
protecting fragile resources	37	37	24	59	31	10	38	38	25
reducing intentional and unintentional vandalism	45	31	22	35	38	28	13	56	31
undertaking maintenance activities	51	28	12	51	41	3	38	56	0
increasing compliance with management activities	26	40	32	24	31	45	19	31	50
managing inappropriate human/wildlife interactions	20	28	50	17	28	55	6	25	69
minimising recreational impacts	16	37	46	17	34	41	19	19	63
reducing accidents	24	35	39	24	34	41	12	50	37
reducing the occurrence of litter	25	26	48	17	34	48	0	19	82

 The technique that most park managers believe the primary emphasis should be placed on

Most QPWS park managers believed that the reduction of intentional and unintentional vandalism was best achieved through the equal use of visitor education and the range of other techniques available to them (RICs – 31%; SRs – 38% & DMs – 56% respectively), but many Rangers-in-Charge (22%), Senior Rangers (28%) and District Managers (31%) also supported a stronger emphasis on visitor education to address

this issue as well. However, most park managers believed that *managing inappropriate human/wildlife interactions* (RICs – 50%; SRs – 55% & DMs – 69%); *minimising recreational impacts* (RICs – 46%; SRs – 41% & DMs – 63%) and *reducing the occurrence of litter* (RICs – 48%; SRs – 48% & DMs – 82%) were better addressed through strategies that emphasised the use of visitor education.

6.2.5 *Specific comments made by park managers about the use of visitor education as a park management tool*

Many QPWS park managers also provided additional comment regarding the use of visitor education as a park management tool. These comments identified the importance of visitor education to change attitudes and encourage community support; the need for a combination of tools to achieve effective outcomes and the lack of funding and/or resourcing to deliver worthwhile visitor education activities. An acknowledgement that current QPWS culture/management regime did not value visitor education was also mentioned (Appendix 4, Additional Comments).

The most common additional comment made by QPWS park managers highlighted the lack of funding and/or resourcing available to deliver worthwhile visitor education activities (32% of additional comments) (Figure 6.17). As a result, visitor education rarely occurred in parks that were not high profile. It was a luxury. For example:

The problems with interp activities in this department in most cases are:

- (a) the dept does not want to pay overtime.*
- (b) there is such a great need of displays, info stands, but very little money.*
- (c) because of funding = staffing levels, I & E very rarely occurs in parks that are not high profile. [PM 74, ac]*

The lack of/reduction of resourcing for park-based interp is a bloody disgrace. This function was better resourced and more effective 15 years ago! More time is spent talking about this at high levels and nothing is done to get things happening. [PM 32, ac]

Particularly in remote parks, provision of interpretation (although highly desirable) runs a poor second to maintenance of developed infrastructure, visitor management etc. This will only change when interp activities are appropriately funded and staffed. [PM 37, ac]

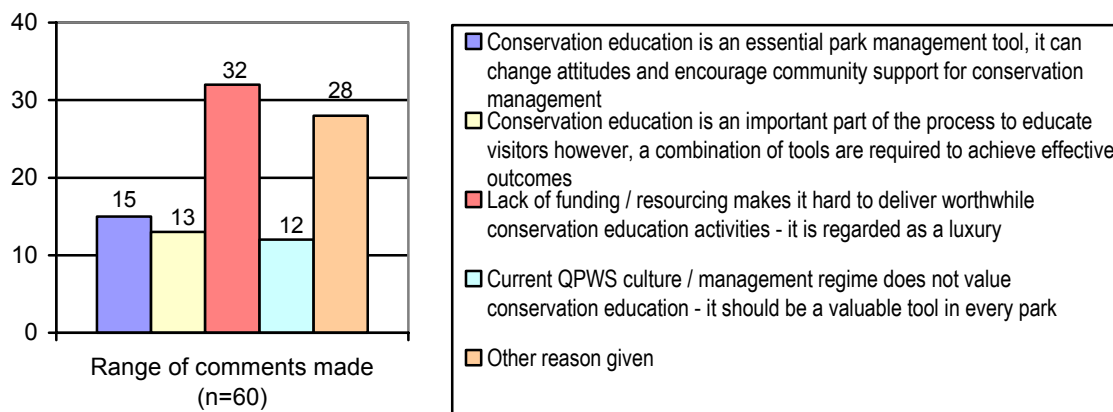


Figure 6.17: Additional comments made by QPWS park managers

Fifteen percent of park managers' additional comments suggested that visitor education was an essential park management tool that could change attitudes and encourage community support for conservation management. Many of these comments included reference to the role of visitor education as a contemporary management tool that was necessary to take park management into the future. For example:

I & E is an essential tool in the range of options for effective park management. The real purpose is to provide an effective way of encouraging community support, help and change attitudes to assist with the role of conservation management. This support is essential if the Service (QPWS) is to provide a park service into the future. Without this, major changes such as regulated use, co-management with traditional owners will be much more difficult to progress. (Regulated use in order to meet all community needs). [PM 134, ac]

I & E is a park management tool. It is also a tool for the remainder of QPWS responsibilities which includes off-park management (such as wildlife issues). As Qld's lead environmental agency, it is EPA's responsibility to inform and empower the general public, including conservation initiatives, land management, sustainable land use and anything threatening to the environment. Many un-environmentally friendly people are so because they do not know any better and still rely on their grandparents' knowledge! [PM 67, ac]

Thirteen percent of additional comments by QPWS park managers inferred that while visitor education was an important part of the process to educate visitors, a combination of tools where necessary to achieve effective outcomes. The use of

patrols and enforcement was a common aspect of comments that identified a combination of techniques for management of the national park estate. For example:

Public contact with visitors through patrols, I & E materials and special activities is only one of a suite of management tools which need to be used by managers to get effective park management. The mix will depend on the situation and circumstance of the management issue and the resources available to managers. [PM 146, ac]

I & E are very important tools and more can be done. However, in most situations it is nearly always necessary to use a combination of tools to achieve a desired outcome. QPWS should always be seen to be 'doing' something and to ensure its primary roles of nature conservation are enforced. [PM 142, ac]

Various messages must be passed onto public and visitors. I & E is an important part of that process but must not be considered the be all/end all. However, it is certainly a first point-of-contact to explain procedures and rules then follow-up or enforcement can be considered. Problem is most visitors only come once and do not really care. [PM 2, ac]

Twelve percent of comments noted that the current culture/management regime did not value conservation and as a result, the QPWS was losing public support. Major change was required: a top-down visitor education culture was necessary, not isolated efforts from individuals. For example:

Existing Agency culture does not embrace interp. For this to change will require major cultural and industrial change to QPWS. An interp culture must be implemented from the top down in QPWS. Isolated efforts from individual staff in QPWS are lost in mediocrity. [PM 71, ac]

When I was RIC of other areas interp was a priority. 1980 we were trained and encouraged and funding provided for overtime. By 1990 we had a Green Government voted in by conservation minded public. Since then new management is not aware of this history and does not value interp. We could lose public support, and therefore lose our parks etc as governments change according to public priorities. If we give public nothing – we get nothing in return. [PM 84, ac]

I & E is only as good as the support for this need in a management unit by District Manager. In some cases it is nil. Uniformity across the State does not exist. [PM 29, ac]

QPWS park managers also provided a range of additional comments about visitor education. These comments included reference to the fact there was a need to extend the role of visitor education (into school curriculum, the media and organisations such as bushcare/landcare) otherwise they were just preaching to the converted (10%). And

the recognition that interpreters should not be seen as another level of management, they should be involved in park management just as park rangers should be involved in interpretation (10%); plus comments of a general nature (8%) (Appendix 2). For example:

I & E should not be confused with actually experiencing! Unfortunately, we are a nation of TV heads, why don't we use this powerful medium more? Often I believe that many of our visitor programs are preaching to the converted – WHO DO WE NEED/WANT TO GET THROUGH TO? [PM 25, ac]

After safety our main priority is I & E however, we have found over and over that the structured interp sessions attract the same old people – 'preaching to the converted'. We have developed 'Interp Patrolling' which is semi-structured but can still flow has proven so successful and popular that it receives the most emphasis. It has had an incredibly positive impact on visitor behaviour. [PM 33, ac]

Interp staff should not be seen to be another level of management that can direct park staff to drop all other tasks because of some program that is being run on the park. Park staff require support not instruction and should be regularly conducting on park interp activities themselves. [PM 38, ac]

In general, these comments were unsolicited, but were an opportunity for QPWS park managers to provide additional commentary on the use of visitor education as a park management tool. From these comments, it was inferred that many QPWS park managers considered visitor education to be a vital park management tool on its own and in combination with other park management techniques, but was greatly underused due to lack of funding or resources and/or an organisational culture that did not value or embrace it. These comments also suggested that while they accepted the need for specialist interpretive staff, visitor education should be a duty of all park rangers. They also believed that the role of visitor education should be extended to reach people other than those who visited parks.

6.3 Summary

This chapter has established that poor resourcing, a lack of funding, high workloads and short project timeframes were some of the most significant barriers to the work that interpreters performed. These barriers have affected the ability of interpreters to deliver quality visitor education outcomes. The level of support provided by some interpreters' supervisors was also identified as a barrier, with many interpreters revealing that the level of support they received from their immediate supervisor(s) was

inadequate. This chapter also revealed that many interpreters felt that their non-interpretive work colleagues did not understand or value the work they performed. Consequently, a lack of supervisor support and an undervaluing by work colleagues has created a sense of alienation among some interpreters. This has contributed to claims by interpreters that a negative organisational culture exists within the QPWS, further entrenching the sense of alienation experienced by many interpreters. As a result, the ability of interpreters to plan and engage the community in nature conservation ideals, and the achievement of key visitor education outcomes were compromised.

This chapter has also established that most QPWS park managers placed equal importance on the use of visitor education and park management tools such as access restrictions, permits, enforcement, site closures and/or site hardening to achieve protection of the natural resource. This was because a combined effort was required to provide effective service delivery. Very few QPWS park managers said that they primarily used park management tools other than visitor education. If they did, it was because of low visitation, the lack of funding and resourcing or a result of some other reason. This chapter also established that most QPWS park managers thought the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park was a permanent Public Contact or Interpretive Ranger. This was due to their better understanding of the park, its natural systems and the issues associated with its management. However, some QPWS park managers believed that a casual/seasonal Public Contact/Interpretive Ranger or a private provider/commercial operator was the best person to provide visitor education services on a national park. This was due to the seasonal nature of visitation to the park or because interpretation was a specialist area requiring commitment, training and selection which only commercial operators could provide.

In particular, this chapter has established that a level of contradiction exists between the perceptions of interpreters and the claims of park managers as to the role and value of visitor education as a park management tool. While data interpretation supports interpreters' claims that a number of barriers to the work they performed exist, chiefly inadequate funding, limited resourcing and a negative organisational culture, it also supports the importance that park managers placed on the role and value of visitor education as a park management tool. Chapter 7 further explores the barriers identified by interpreters and the support provided by park managers to identify the real issues affecting the acceptance and use of visitor education as a park management

tool. This is to establish the mechanisms required to enhance the role and value of visitor education in the QPWS and contribute to the Government's desire to enhance the visitor education capacity of the QPWS.